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SUBJECT: INTERMEDIATE RECONCILIATION MEASURES FOR PM MALIKI

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Daniel V. Speckhard for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: As intermediate reconciliation measures, PM Maliki could follow up on his March visit to Anbar with further outreach to Sunni areas; take steps to mitigate the effects of de-Ba'athification; appoint a senior Sunni adviser; make a targeted political push for a consensus candidate for Minister of Health; and take steps to ensure impartiality in humanitarian assistance. End Summary.

¶2. (C) To keep momentum for reconciliation, Embassy Baghdad has identified a number of interim reconciliation measures for PM Maliki. Reconciliation remains a tough slog: easy measures tend to be mostly symbolic; effective measures are politically controversial and tough to implement. The measures we suggest below are not free of political problems, nor will they resolve the substance of Iraq's reconciliation issues. However, they are feasible and could serve as springboards for more effective measures.

Outreach to Sunnis

¶3. (C) The PM's March visit to Anbar province was well-received. The PM could follow up with a series of other outreach initiatives to Sunni areas.

-- The PM could visit another heavily-Sunni area, such as Tikrit, or could officially re-open the Al-Qa'im border crossing in Anbar province.

-- The PM could invite Anbar and Salah ad Din provincial councils to Baghdad for a series of meetings with him and key ministers.

-- The PM could urge key ministers, especially those in charge of services, to visit heavily-Sunni provinces with an eye toward identifying priority projects for the GOI in each province.

-- In Baghdad, where Sunnis are not represented on the provincial council, the PM could meet with Baghdad Sunni leaders and ask them to identify priority projects in Baghdad's Sunni neighborhoods.

-- Along the same lines, the PM could direct Sunni DPM Zawbai, who heads the Fardh al-Qanoon Executive Steering Committee's services committee, to produce a list of priority services projects in Baghdad's Sunni neighborhoods.

Mitigate de-Ba'athification

¶4. (C) Final passage of meaningful de-Ba'athification reform faces a difficult path. However, there are a number of intermediate steps that would be less difficult and could mitigate de-Ba'athification's effects.

-- The PM could start by sending to the Council of Representatives the "compromise draft" de-Ba'athification reform law signed by the PM and President Talabani in late March.

-- The PM could direct the Council of Ministers to suspend implementation of de-Ba'athification orders issued by the Higher National de-Ba'athification Commission (HNDBC) pending passage of de-Ba'athification reform legislation.

-- A more modest approach would be for the PM to grant case-by-case exemptions to individual de-Ba'athification orders and reinstate individual government employees and their pensions.

-- In particular, the PM could make certain his effort to reinstate former army officers continues.

A Senior Sunni PM Adviser

¶5. (C) -- With relations between the PM and Sunni VP al-Hashimi badly strained, the PM could name a senior Sunni politician as an adviser.

A Targeted Political Push for a New Health Minister

¶6. (C) Sectarian provision of health services, especially in Baghdad, remains a sore point with Sunnis and a potent symbol of sectarian strife. Broad cabinet changes are hindered by the need for political consensus on a number of points, including the sensitive post of Defense Minister.

-- The PM could publicly proclaim the Health Ministry as an area off-limits to sectarianism, appoint a cross-sectarian commission of Shia, Sunnis and Kurds to identify and name a candidate to be the new Health Minister, and take that nomination to the Council of Representatives on a priority basis.

Guarantee Impartiality of Humanitarian Assistance

¶7. (C) The Ministry of Displacement and Migration is headed by a Shia Kurd minister who has largely focused on the return of Shia Kurds (aka Faili Kurds) from Iran, and has promoted Shia and Faili Kurd employees at the Ministry. More attention should be paid to the plight of refugees in Jordan and Syria, and to the needs of internally displaced persons (Sunni, Shia and Christians).

-- The PM could order the minister of Displacement and Migration to promote qualified Sunni civil servants to positions of responsibility.

-- The Ministry of Displacement and Migration could open a second branch office in Baghdad, to better serve internally displaced Sunnis.

-- The Ministry could strengthen its branch office in Anbar province, where there are many internally displaced Sunnis.

-- The GOI could engage the Government of Jordan and the Government of Syria and convince them (and compensate them if necessary) to extend education to all Iraqi children in these two countries.

-- The PM could consider replacing the current Minister of Displacement and Migration with a Minister that is more assertive and active in helping the close to one million new internally displaced persons and the most vulnerable Iraqis among the up to two million Iraqis out of the country.

SPECKHARD